

Bandwidth Options and the 2014 E-rate Application Process (Updated January 9, 2014)

This paper provides information on the 2014 E-rate¹ application process in relation to options schools and libraries have to procure bandwidth.

Bandwidth: The 2014 E-rate application timeframe

The 2014 E-rate funding year is from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. The E-rate's Form 471 application filing window is open from January 9 to March 26, 2014. Within this timeframe the absolute last day to file the initial Form 470—and have it open for the required 28 days—is February 26. However, waiting to file the 470 until February 26 means you have just one day (i.e., March 26) to sign a contract with a provider and file the 471 and its required attachments. To allow more time to complete all the necessary tasks prior to filing the 471, a more realistic Form 470 deadline is February 10-15.

Bandwidth: Points to consider

- What E-rate forms need to be filed will depend on which bandwidth option is selected.
- The options below pertain only to procuring bandwidth, not Internet service. Increasing bandwidth may increase a school or library's cost for Internet service. Check with your Internet provider on this.
- FCC rules now allow applicants to get E-rate discounts on broadband provided by non-telecommunication providers (e.g., municipalities, community area networks, etc.). Certain conditions apply, especially in relation to any needed fiber build-out. For more information see pages 3-6 in the FCC FAQ at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-10-2356A1.pdf.
- The state Department of Administration (DOA) currently has a process open seeking bids from Internet Service Providers which will include both Internet access and the related broadband circuit costs. As of the date on this document no additional information is available on this bid process. DOA or DPI will keep schools and libraries informed of any updates that may impact the 2014 E-rate application process.
- DPI always encourages schools and libraries to explore fully all their bandwidth options. Ultimately the bandwidth provider(s) selected is a local school or library decision.

Bandwidth option 1: BadgerNet Converged Network (BCN) with TEACH discount

Approximately 85% of the state's school districts and public libraries get at least some of their bandwidth via BadgerNet (aka, BCN) and much of this bandwidth is subsidized by the state's TEACH program.² For eligible schools and libraries TEACH provides approximately a 90% subsidy on BadgerNet's contracted bandwidth costs. TEACH charges \$100/month for bandwidth at or below 3Mbps and \$250/month for bandwidth between 5 - 100Mbps.³ There are several benefits to this option. For example, the BCN provides 24x7x365 support and a very high degree of network reliability and scalability. In addition, this option does not require you to file any E-rate forms. However, requests for bandwidth increases must meet the TEACH guidelines (linked on the TEACH Website). If possible, file any bandwidth increase requests with TEACH by January 24. Only after all requests for bandwidth increases have been submitted and reviewed will TEACH then know if it has sufficient

¹ For information on the E-rate program see the Schools and Libraries Division website at <http://www.usac.org/sl/>.

² The Department of Administration oversees the BCN and administers the BCN contract. For more information see http://www.doa.state.wi.us/section_detail.asp?linkcatid=308&linkid=119&locid=155. For more information on the TEACH program see <http://www.teachwi.state.wi.us>.

³ BadgerNet provides bandwidths above 100Mbps but TEACH does not subsidize bandwidths above 100Mbps and it does not subsidize non-BCN circuits. For purchasing bandwidth on the BCN above 100Mbps, see option #2.

funds to grant a particular school/library's bandwidth request. If a bandwidth increase cannot be granted, TEACH will make reasonable efforts to notify applicants of this as soon as possible to allow them time to file for E-rate using one of the other options below. Note also the following:

- Libraries with a TEACH discount that need more bandwidth should first contact their library system.
- TEACH does not have the financial resources to provide bandwidth discounts to all schools in a district. Thus for other district schools, options 2 and 3 will be of interest.
- TEACH subsidized circuits may not be used as a redundant (i.e., backup) service. (Redundant services are also not allowed under the E-rate program.)
- All requests for bandwidth increases, decreases, termination of service, etc., can be done via the TEACH web portal at <http://teach.wisconsin.gov/portal>. See the TEACH guidelines for information on how to access the portal.
- *E-RATE FILING*: For this option TEACH files all E-rate forms.

Bandwidth option 2: BadgerNet contract rate (no TEACH discount)

All schools and libraries can get more bandwidth on BadgerNet and pay the contract rates. AT&T, the BCN prime vendor, will bill the school/library directly for any bandwidth not subsidized by TEACH. One benefit of this option is that the extra bandwidth can be seamlessly added to any TEACH discounted BCN bandwidth. BadgerNet bandwidth contract rates up to 100Mbps are linked on the TEACH website. If you need more than 100Mbps contact Rob Roy (rr3914@att.com) or Sara Schroeder (ss1927@att.com) at AT&T for a price quote. Once you get a quote the actual request for this added bandwidth must be made by completing a TEACH Service Change Request Form on the TEACH web portal. For more information on this process, see the section titled "Additional Bandwidth" in the TEACH "Policies" document at

<http://teach.wisconsin.gov/docview.asp?docid=24022&locid=85>. Once TEACH receives your request for more bandwidth its staff then places the order with AT&T. You will be notified as the order is processed.

E-RATE FILING: For this option schools/libraries do not have to file a Form 470 but they must file a Form 471 and all follow-up E-rate forms. On the Form 471, cite the DOA's Form 470 (#449990000499944) which was used to establish the BCN contract.

Bandwidth option 3: Other provider

With this option a school or library procures bandwidth from another provider, outside of the TEACH program and BadgerNet. If bandwidth from another provider will be in addition to a BCN circuit, the school/library will be responsible for managing bandwidth from different providers. This option may be of particular interest to school districts that cannot get TEACH BCN discounts for all schools in the district. Some providers, especially in urban areas, may offer bandwidth at costs lower than the BadgerNet contract costs referenced in option #2.

E-RATE FILING: For this option schools/libraries must file *all E-rate forms*. File a Form 470 to get bandwidth cost quote(s) from providers. On the 470, question #8 and in any RFP, be certain to list the maximum bandwidth you anticipate needing through at least June 30, 2015. If you want to consider a multi-year contract state this on the 470 (or in any RFP) and list the maximum bandwidth you anticipate needing to the end of the contract. (*Do not underestimate your bandwidth needs.*) Using cost as a primary factor (an E-rate requirement), evaluate any bids, select a provider, sign any needed contract and then file Form 471. As noted above, a realistic deadline to file the Form 470 is about February 10-15 and the Form 471 deadline is March 26, 2014.

Contacts

If you have questions on bandwidth options and the 2014 E-rate application process, contact Bob Bocher, State E-rate Support Manager, (robert.bocher@dpi.wi.gov) on the DPI staff. If you have questions about the TEACH program or requesting bandwidth via TEACH, contact TEACH (608-261-5054, teach@wisconsin.gov).